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LOCAL GOVERNMENT DISASTER PROTECTION. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.(U)
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Executive Summary

LOCAL GOVERNMENT DISASTER PROTECTION

FINAL TECHNICAL REPORT

February 1981

Under Grant No. DCPA 01-78-C-0312

Work Unit No. 4511-I

Approved for Public Release: Distribution Limited

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by

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FEMA REVIEW NOTICE

"This report has been reviewed in the Federal Emergency Management Agency and approved for publication. Approval does not signify that the contents necessarily reflect the views and policies of the Federal Emergency Management Agency."

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The opinions expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the International City Management Association.

Summary

This report presents the results of an examination of local emergency management organizational arrangements and the development of a process by which local governments can organize for emergency management.

It is a fundamental conclusion of this project that a single organization arrangement which is optimal for all communities does not exist. The reasons for this conclusion are numerous and include: *p. 3*

- Legal constraints - state and/or local statutes and ordinances may dictate certain elements of the organizational structure which is used by a particular community. For example, a state statute might place certain responsibilities and authorities with the highest elected official.
- Day-to-day organization - the day-to-day organizational structure of a community can place certain requirements on the emergency management structure.

This is particularly true because the emergency management structure should be as close to the day-to-day operating structure as practical.

In addition, cities vary in the way in which they are organized. For example, in one city, emergency

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medical services might be provided by the fire department, while in another city, these services might be provided by the police, the hospital, or a private ambulance company.

- Personalities and leadership skills - it was found that organizational structures frequently develop around individual personalities or particular leadership skills. For example, a city manager might decide to appoint the director of a department as head of Emergency Management Operations because this individual has specialized skills/experience and/or the respect of other government officials. If this individual had been director of a different department, then emergency management would be the responsibility of that department. Thus, emergency management responsibilities are sometimes assigned to individuals without regard to their governmental positions, or the nature of the departments they direct.
- Regional considerations - a number of emergency management programs involve several different jurisdictions; that is, they are organized and operated on

a joint powers agreement, or other organizational structure. A single organizational model would probably not fit the various multijurisdictional arrangements that are in use around the country.

Therefore, this project aimed to provide information to local government officials so that they can systematically develop the emergency management organizational structure which is optimal for their particular requirements and environment.

For the purposes of this project, the research team defined the optimal structure to be one which provided the basis for an effective emergency management program. An "effective" program was defined to be one which:

"when applied during a disaster, will provide the levels of protection for life and property, and recovery, which are acceptable to the citizens of the community."

It is, of course, impossible for the research team to determine what levels are acceptable to citizens of any given community--in fact, the citizens

themselves probably do not know what is or is not acceptable, until a disaster has occurred. However, the research team has formulated subjective, qualitative conclusions concerning what is and what is not acceptable. For example, it is felt that citizens expect their local governments to:

- 1) Inform the general public concerning the meaning of alerting signals, action to take, availability of flood insurance, etc., in advance of the disaster.
- 2) Quickly and accurately assess the magnitude of the situation, and so report to the general public, and keep the public informed throughout the incident.
- 3) Provide for the rapid restoration of services, even when specific services are not the direct responsibility of the local government, e.g., private utilities.
- 4) Provide for (or access to) recovery services, such as insurance claim preparation, tax counseling, family reunification, etc.
- 5) Provide information on, and specific action steps toward mitigating the impact of future emergencies.

Based on these expectations as well as "good" management principles, a set of organizational characteristics were identified as contributing to an effective emergency management organizational structure. These characteristics and their definitions follow:

ABILITY TO ALERT THE PUBLIC MAXIMIZED

A public alerting function should be included within a local government emergency management organizational structure. This alerting function should be operational for all types of natural and man-made disasters faced by a community, not just for foreign attack. Furthermore, provisions should exist to alert all segments of the community, e.g., the handicapped and non-English speaking residents.

ABILITY TO MAINTAIN COMPREHENSIVE RECORDS DURING A DISASTER

The organizational structure should provide for the collecting and recording of disaster-related information, including financial data on governmental expenditures. Information should be maintained in accordance with state and federal requirements for reimbursement in case an official "disaster" is declared.

ACTIVE INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION

The emergency management organization structure should be designed to effectively interface with neighboring communities and state and federal emergency management organizations.

ALL HAZARD APPROACH

A local government emergency management organizational structure (and detailed plans) should be designed to deal with the types of disasters which are most likely to occur (such as natural disasters and industrial accidents; not just foreign attack), so as to have an emergency management capability which both meets anticipated needs and attracts strong participation and support from municipal employees and the general public.

CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT

Residents of the community should be included in the emergency management program. In fact, they have a number of responsibilities, including:

- a. recognizing alerting signals
- b. knowing what to do when an alert occurs
- c. knowing how to personally cope with minor injuries and damage
- d. being generally prepared for possible disasters.

In addition, citizens may serve as volunteers in the emergency management effort--either directly with the city, or indirectly through community volunteer organizations.

DISASTER PREVENTION AND MITIGATION

Advance actions can be taken to either prevent the occurrence of an emergency situation, or to mitigate the consequences of a disaster should one occur. For example, strictly enforced controls on the transport of hazardous materials may prevent a disaster from occurring; an incentive program to discourage construction in a flood plain may not prevent a flood, but could minimize the consequences of the event.

Disaster prevention activities can also be conducted after a disaster has occurred, e.g., prior to reconstruction. For example, houses might be reconstructed in a different area or incorporate storm-resistive features.

ELIGIBILITY FOR STATE AND FEDERAL SUBSIDIES CONSIDERED

A community which is seeking state or federal subsidies for emergency management operations should consider corresponding applicable requirements related to its organizational structure.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PLANNING = ONGOING ACTIVITY

The emergency management planning function should be established within the overall local government organization in such a way as to provide the status and authority necessary to obtain the attention, cooperation and respect of other agency personnel. To the maximum extent possible, the planning function should be integrated into the daily operations of a local government; that is, organizational relationships should be established which require frequent contact between planning personnel and other governmental personnel.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES ARE AS CLOSE TO ROUTINE OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES AS POSSIBLE

The organizational structure should provide for the integration of emergency preparedness functions into the day-to-day operations of the community; that is, emergency planning should be a part of routine activities and not something that is "taken off the shelf" when a disaster occurs. Furthermore, personnel in the organization should be generally acquainted with others with whom they will be working during a disaster.

GOOD INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

The organizational structure should recognize the fact that the effectiveness of emergency management operations is dependent upon personalities and interpersonal interdepartmental relationship--and, that these relationships may change as specific individuals are assigned into, and out of, the organization.

INTERNAL ALERTING PROCEDURES

The emergency management organization should provide for the alerting of key officials and personnel in times of disaster, including during non-duty hours, and when the public telephone system is not operational.

MOTIVATION PROVIDED FOR INVOLVEMENT IN THE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

The organization should include motivation for participation in the emergency management program. Such motivation can apply to both individuals and organizations, and can consist of recognition, status, acknowledgement of capability, etc.

MULTIPLE USE OF RESOURCES

The organizational structure should promote the use of

emergency management resources for routine governmental functions. For example, emergency management training resources could be used for general governmental employee training in cardio-pulmonary resuscitation (CPR).

ONGOING MONITORING FOR POTENTIAL DISASTERS

The organizational structure should provide for an emergency management monitoring function staffed on a 24-hour basis. The purpose of this function is to monitor the development of potential disaster situations so that governmental employees, and the general public, can be placed on various stages of alert as appropriate. In addition, this function assists the community in rapidly establishing an accurate and complete understanding of the nature and magnitude of a particular situation.

PUBLIC INFORMATION FUNCTION CLEARLY DEFINED

The organizational structure should include a designated disaster public information function, to provide disaster-related information to the general public and coordination with the news media. The disaster public information function should be the focal point for the release of all information concerning the disaster and should coordinate the activities of all other (i.e., non-disaster) public

information functions. Ideally, the routine overall government public information function (if it exists) should be the same as the disaster public information function.

PUBLIC/PRIVATE COOPERATION

The emergency management organization structure should include the entire community, not just local government employees. Emergency management is a community responsibility and the corresponding organization and planning must include public and private organizations, adjacent cities, the county, the Salvation Army, associations for the handicapped, associations of insurance agents, etc. In addition,

organizations which are currently providing a given service (e.g., assisting the blind) should be used to provide that service (e.g., alerting the blind) in a disaster situation whenever appropriate. Use of these in-place networks provides three major benefits:

1. A unit of local government does not have to directly provide that service.
2. Cooperation from the public is maximized by utilizing familiar networks.
3. The more community organizations which are

made a part of the emergency management organization, the greater will be the depth and breadth of support for the emergency management in general.

ROLES OF ELECTED OFFICIALS DEFINED

The roles of elected local government officials should be specifically defined in the emergency management organizational structure. These officials will of course, have key roles in representing their respective constituencies during the emergency situation; however, they are frequently assigned additional functions within a disaster operation. Such additional emergency assignments should be clearly represented within the organizational structure.

SIMILAR ROUTINE/DISASTER ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES

The organizational structure which is implemented for disaster situations should be similar to the structure which is used for day-to-day emergencies; that is, as much as possible the disaster organizational structure should be an extension and expansion of the routine emergency structure, --adding special functions (e.g., damage assessment) and lines of coordination (e.g., with volunteer organizations) as needed. To the extend possible, personnel should continue

to work with the supervisor and associates that he/she works with on a day-to-day basis.

STRONG AND DEFINITIVE LINES OF COMMAND

The organizational structure should clearly delineate lines of authority and responsibility for all phases of a disaster operation, specifically:

1. Planning and preparation
2. Monitoring and alerting
3. Operations
4. Recovery

Specific lines of command in emergency preparedness are especially important considering the fact that a number of governmental agencies may be involved in the disaster situation. Furthermore, all individual personnel should know of the established lines of command.

STRONG COORDINATION AMONG PARTICIPATING AGENCIES

Emergency management is a community responsibility, not just a local government responsibility. It is necessary for the organizational structure to clearly identify those individuals (or organizations) which have the responsibility to coordinate (rather than command) resources

which are outside of the direct control of the unit of local government, e.g., other public and private organizations such as the American Red Cross.

The research team developed a process by which local government officials could incorporate the characteristics they found desirable into their own organizational arrangement for emergency management services.

